



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Hearings set in Wenatchee, Yakima for fruit and vegetable inspection fee hike

OLYMPIA – In order to maintain inspection services in the face of rising costs, the state Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is proposing to increase fees for unit-weight (hundred-weight) inspections for numerous commodities, including apples, pears and potatoes. Although there have been hourly inspection fee increases in recent years, the hundred-weight (cwt.) unit fees have not been increased for 16 years.

Among other proposals, per-acre fees would increase for field or orchard inspections, and the minimum charges would increase for issuing a certificate of compliance. The certificates state that a product meets state requirements for grade and condition at the time of shipping.

The Fruit & Vegetable Inspection Program fees for hourly rates, phytosanitary certification, minimum certification and Customer Assisted Inspection Program (CAIP) fees are not affected by the proposal. The agency also is proposing a volume discount for apples and pears that are inspected and certified online for domestic shipment and controlled atmosphere certification.

“The time has finally come when we can no longer provide necessary services without more revenue to meet our costs,” said Jim Quigley, program manager for the Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program.

In efforts to avoid fee increases and create efficiencies to hold down costs, WSDA closed one of its district offices in Eastern Washington in 2002, reduced management and clerical staff, and implemented computer technology systems that gives industry associations and shippers easier access to data and allows them to save money through online services for certificates of compliance.

Under a cooperative agreement, the U.S. Department of Agriculture—Agriculture Marketing Service gives WSDA horticultural inspectors the authority to issue federal documents that certify the quality and condition of many of the state’s fruits and vegetables to meet federal marketing orders and export requirements.

“The integrity of our third-party inspection is what makes our service so valuable to growers and shippers so domestic and export markets remain open to our agriculture,” Quigley said.

The Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program is the largest program within WSDA and faces cost pressures with anticipated wage and health benefit increases in the new fiscal year. State law requires that user fees be adequate to recover costs of providing inspection or other requested services.

Public hearings will be held at the following times and locations:

Wenatchee: 1 p.m. April 26 at the Tree Fruit Research Center, 11200 Western Ave.

Yakima: 11 a.m. April 27 at the WSDA Yakima Office, 21 North First St.

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Information on the proposal, including a copy of the proposed rules, is on the WSDA Web site at <http://agr.wa.gov/LawsRules/Rulemaking/CI/FVFees.htm>. Comments are due by 5 p.m. April 27 and may be sent to Jim Quigley, program manager, Fruit & Vegetable Inspection Program, Commodity Inspection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560; by e-mail at jquigley@agr.wa.gov; or by phone (360) 902-1833.

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